

# Small Learning Communities

**Decatur Township School for Excellence is Making it Happen!**



**WE ARE** The MSD of Decatur Township is a school district of 6,234 students on the Southwest side of Marion County. In 2014, we introduced the Decatur Township School For Excellence, offering 2 more small learning communities (SLC's) at the high school level. SLC's allow our students to learn in a small cohort while having access to the resources of a large school district.

**OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES** 65% of MSD Decatur students are on free and reduced lunch. Our demographic breakdown is 72% white, 10% Hispanic, 10% African American, 5% multiracial.

**OUR TEACHERS** The MSD of Decatur Township employs and develops over 300 high quality teachers and leaders to educate students with a strong foundation in academics, technology and strength of character.

## OUR PROMISING PRACTICE

The implementation of Small Learning Communities has allowed our school to utilize the strengths, diverse backgrounds, and supportive, caring nature of its staff to create an education program that serves the needs of our high school community. It is our belief that all students can be successful in their learning environment and maximize opportunities for success. Our program values and respects individual self-worth and encourages personal academic achievement. DTSE currently has two Small Learning Communities that function within the same school. We see this as a way to truly meet the individual needs of our students. The Leadership and Community Connections (LCC) Community allows students to be independent workers through project based inquiry and The Blended Learning Community provides students with blended and virtual learning opportunities.

**OUR STEPS** The staff and students have put much effort into setting norms and creating a climate of mutual support and accountability in order for the Small Learning Communities model to be successful. Our students feel safe in a small community where their voices are not only heard but elicited and where our differences are celebrated. Staff and students meet frequently to collaborate and brainstorm next steps to continue growing our unique school culture. We all work together to hold each other accountable, maintain clear expectations, and to ensure that all students have the opportunity for success.

**IN OUR OWN WORDS...** "My teachers keep giving me good grades on my papers because they say I make connections to real life and what we're studying. Isn't that what everyone does?"

"To me, our school has always been about more than just numbers, it is also about our mind-set and our values. Some of us may stumble, but we are not quitters. We have learned to never give up." "My teachers care about more than my grades. They want me to be successful in life." "DTSE has given me a second chance to get my diploma. I care about my education again."

For more information about our school or corporation, email: [tvanwanzeele@msddecatur.k12.in.us](mailto:tvanwanzeele@msddecatur.k12.in.us) or visit our website: [www.msddecatur.k12.in.us](http://www.msddecatur.k12.in.us)